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# VEGETABLES

## WINTER ACREAGE

(January, February, March)



January 16, 2001

### FLORIDA

This report reflects conditions as of January 1 and represents acreage for harvest during the winter months of January, February, March. Estimated acreage for harvest by growing area includes the acreage that may be abandoned due to recent freezes and is presented in order: area, previous year (2000), current year (2001).

**WEATHER:** A sub-tropical low that formed in the Florida Straits in early October brought significant amounts of rain to Vero Beach, West Palm Beach, Loxahatchee, Ft. Lauderdale, Homestead, and Tavernier with monthly totals ranging from six to thirteen inches. Elsewhere, rainfall was mostly limited to an inch and a third or less except for three to four inches reported in St. Augustine and Canal Point. Live Oak reported no measurable rain for the month and St. Leo recorded only traces. October rainfall was mostly an inch to over three inches below normal. Temperatures during October were mostly one to four degrees below normal. October minimum low temperatures were in the 50s, 60s and 70s with the Crestview airport recording at least one low at 49 degrees. Cool, dry weather continued into November. Temperatures at the major stations averaged normal to three degrees below. Most low temperatures were in the 50s, 60s and 70s while most high temperatures averaged in the 60s, 70s and 80s. Jacksonville, Pensacola and Tallahassee recorded at least one low in the 20s. November rainfall totals ranged from none at Ft. Myers to over eight inches at Pensacola. Dry conditions persisted during December with rains at the major stations totaling from traces at Melbourne to about six inches at Miami and Ft. Lauderdale. Homestead recorded from two to fifteen inches which nearly all fell on only one day during early December. These heavy showers destroyed the winter potato crop in Dade County. Frost and freezing temperatures dipped into some central Peninsula localities after mid-December with temperatures plummeting into the 30s at Homestead and the 20s at Immokalee during the first week of the new year. These freezes caused significant damage to vegetables with actual losses currently being evaluated.

**TOMATOES:** Mostly dry weather during October, November and December provided nearly ideal planting and harvesting weather. The heavy rains in Dade County during early December caused no significant harm to the crop. Strong winds tossed vines in the Southwest and East Coast regions, and in Dade County, about mid-December with no significant damage reported. Picking in southwestern and southeastern localities remained mostly steady during December and into January. Dade County producers started picking a small acreage during late December with volume increasing in early to mid-January. Dade County growers ran irrigation to protect plants from freeze damage during early January. Southwestern producers picked fruit from fields damaged by the early January cold. Freeze damage around Immokalee to foliage was significant with younger plants receiving less damage than older plants. Southwestern growers kept fields as wet as possible to aid plant recovery after the freeze. Some plants in the East Coast region showed cold damage to the tops of plants while other plants in warmer spots were not affected. However, yield prospects were reduced by strong, cold winds accompanying the freeze which increased bloom drop. The following estimates include the acreage that may be abandoned due to recent freezes. (Southwest, 9,000, 10,000; Dade, 2,800, 2,900; East Coast, 2,100, 2,000; All areas, 13,900, 14,900)

**SWEET CORN:** Planting started during early November in Dade County and became more active during late December in the East Coast region. Picking in the Everglades area gained momentum during early December. Oldest plants were tasseling in Dade County by early December when a storm brought heavy rain to acreage in east Homestead. However, the crop suffered no significant damage from this rain with plants recovering by mid-month. A few Dade County fields contained small ears by mid-December. Cool temperatures in the East Coast region near mid-month caused no significant damage to the crop. However, temperatures reached down into the 20s in some pockets of the Everglades region during the new year freezes. These cold temperatures caused some major losses with actual damage currently being evaluated. Dade County producers started harvesting by the new year. The following estimates include the acreage that may be abandoned due to recent freezes. (East Coast and Dade County, 6,100, 5,800; Everglades and other, 1,300, 2,700; All areas, 7,400, 8,500)

**BELL PEPPER:** Dry weather during October, November and December provided nearly ideal conditions for winter crop planting. Cold temperatures and strong winds around mid-December caused no significant damage to the crop. Picking in the Southwest and East Coast regions remained steady during December and into the new year. Producers used freeze covers as protection from the very cold temperatures during the first week of the new year with most plants saved. Some uncovered plants show foliage damage to the tops with actual loss currently being measured. The following estimates include the acreage that may be abandoned due to recent freezes. (Southwest and Central, 1,900, 1,400; Southeast, 2,900, 3,100; All areas, 4,800, 4,500)

**CABBAGE:** The cabbage crop is in good condition. The cold temperatures on December 31 and January 1 did no major damage to the crop. Harvest is active. Quality and head size are good. (All areas, 3,000, 1,000)

**EGGPLANT:** Crop conditions were good until the cold weather at the end of December and early January. Freeze covers were used in some areas to protect the plants. Uncovered foliage suffered varying amounts of damage. Crop condition ranges from poor to good. Harvesting is underway. (All areas, 600, 500)

**SNAP BEANS:** The crop is in poor condition. The cold temperatures burned the top leaves on snap bean plants. Most plants are expected to recover. The very cool temperatures are slowing growth and development. Actual losses are currently being assessed. (All areas, 9,500, 11,000)

**STRAWBERRIES:** Crop production has proceeded at a slower pace than last season due to some growers switching to later producing varieties. Harvest started in late November. Growers irrigated plants and immature fruit as protection from the recent cold with wet fields slowing some picking in early January. Picking is active with fair to good quality available. (All areas, 6,300, 6,500)

### UNITED STATES

The prospective area for harvest of 13 selected fresh market vegetables during the winter quarter is forecast at 193,000 acres. This is 2 percent below 2000 but 2 percent above 1999. Acreage decreases in broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, head lettuce, bell peppers, and spinach more than offset increases in snap beans, celery, sweet corn, escarole/endive, and tomatoes.

**CABBAGE:** Winter acreage for harvest is forecast at 7,900, 27 percent below 2000 and 39 percent below 1999. In most areas of Texas, rain has been plentiful. The Rio Grande Valley crops are progressing well under favorable weather conditions. Rains in the San Antonio/Winter Garden areas delayed planting but actually benefitted acreage already planted.

Selected Fresh Market Vegetables and Strawberries: Area for Harvest by Crop, State, and Total, Winter Season, 1999-2001

Selected crops and States	Usual harvest period	Winter acreage			2001 area for harvest as percent of 2000
		Harvested		For harvest 2001	
		1999	2000		
		Acres			Percent
SNAP BEANS: Florida	Jan-Mar	9,500	9,500	11,000	116
CABBAGE:					
Florida	Jan-Mar	6,000	3,000	1,000	33
Texas	Dec-Mar	7,000	7,800	6,900	88
Total		13,000	10,800	7,900	73
SWEET CORN:					
Florida	Jan-Mar	5,900	7,400	8,500	115
EGGPLANT:					
Florida	Jan-Mar	700	600	500	83
ESCAROLE/ENDIVE:					
Florida	Jan-Mar	750	600	900	150
BELL PEPPER: <sup>1/</sup>					
Florida	Jan-Mar	5,000	4,800	4,500	94
TOMATOES:					
Florida	Jan-Mar	15,900	13,900	14,900	107
CARROTS:					
California	Jan-Mar	22,000	23,000	23,000	100
Texas	Dec-Mar	2,800	3,500	3,000	86
Total		24,800	26,500	26,000	98
HEAD LETTUCE:					
Arizona--Western	Nov-Apr	44,000	50,300	50,300	100
California	Jan-Mar	19,000	19,500	18,200	93
Total		63,000	69,800	68,500	98
BROCCOLI: <sup>1/</sup>					
California	Jan-Mar	31,500	31,000	30,000	97
CAULIFLOWER: <sup>1/</sup>					
California	Jan-Mar	10,000	11,500	10,500	91
CELERY: <sup>1/</sup>					
California	Jan-Mar	7,800	7,500	7,700	103
SPINACH:					
Texas	Dec-Mar	2,100	2,600	2,100	81
TOTAL OF CROPS LISTED					
Florida		43,750	39,800	41,300	104
United States		189,950	196,500	193,000	98
STRAWBERRIES <sup>1/</sup>					
Florida	Dec-May	6,200	6,300	6,500	103

<sup>1/</sup> Includes fresh market and processing. <sup>2/</sup> Not published to avoid disclosure.